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S E C R E T YEREVAN 002113

SIPDIS

EUR/CACEN FOR EUGENIA SIDEREAS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IR](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: FM TAPS SPECIAL ADVISOR AS NEXT AMBASSADOR TO IRAN

REF: YEREVAN 2019

Classified By: DCM AF Godfrey for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

(S) Karen Nazarian, Special Advisor to Armenia's Foreign Minister, told us September 24 that FM Vartan Oskanian had asked him to serve as Armenia's next Ambassador to Iran. He said the information was still extremely close-hold and that only the President, FM and a handful within the MFA were aware of the decision. Nazarian claimed that the news came as a surprise to him, but linked it to his role in successfully managing the MFA's role in three recently announced bi-lateral energy and infrastructure projects -- the Armenia-Iran gas pipeline, thermal water station and Kajaran Pass tunnel (reftel). Nazarian appeared confident that the nomination would gain approval from President Kocharyan's office, especially in light of Nazarian's multiple trips to Tehran accompanying the President. He said that Iran issues were becoming increasingly important within the MFA as demonstrated by the recent state visit by Iranian President Khatami and MFA's choice to promote Armenia's current Ambassador to Iran, Geram Garibdzhanian, to the post of Deputy Minister (the MFA has not confirmed the news regarding Garibdzhanian, although press reports continue to rumor the move).

EVANS